

GENERAL DATA-----RETRO LOOK

As I sit here in my 79th year of life experience, I am deeply pre-occupied with the situation that I am now in.

The question is, as somebody neatly tried to write and attribute to somebody else, I am being paid back for all of the "bad things I have done to people through the years"?

I find that very hard to accept, not due to some particular ethic but in point of fact. I have never been vicious or evil deliberately to other people or animals so why am I "being paid back" for things that I don't perceive that I did. Another view point says that I am lucky to be alive where I am right now, what with all of the things that have happened to me through my lifetime.

Either I have missed the writing that reports all about it, but it becomes quite apparent that the aging process is one that is neatly covered over from the human consciousness for one reason or another, I'm not sure. But there must be millions of other people, many millions, who are in the same steady physical deterioration process that I am, and still keep living.

So it gets to the point where you wonder why do you keep living. The answer for me is that I don't really have it hard put as to why I still live. I must have missed in my reading books that talk about the aging process. I get the uncomfortable feeling that where I am right now, a lot of people have been there and again millions are there right

now.

My vision is failing. I can't seem to find glasses that will help me read better, so I read less. I tried three different ophthalmologists and each came up with a different set of glasses, none of which really let me see better. The pair of reading glasses I bought in the local drug store are better for reading as a whole. I had a retinal scan at the hospital, and after a long and painful examination, all they could indicate was that the aperture in the center(I don;t have the medical label) was showing signs of disfunction. It could be treated with radiation, they said, and it might help, they said, but it also might make it worse.

My hearing has gone down, namely not going deaf but my frequency perception apparently is getting less. Also, my comprehension is less of speech. I have to have it repeated. I am at the point where frequencies over 7500 hz are difficult for me to hear, if at all. Also, I cannot listen too well to mumbling dialogue or conversation and piece the words together properly.

My energy factor is very limited. I try to do things, for example walking, I can walk maybe 300 or 400 feet and I get tired,i.e., I also get claudication in my right calf to the point where I can't walk any more and I have to stop and rest for a bit. Keeping balance when I stand is a constant,

conscious task, not autonomic.

My dexterity is down. For example, things are more difficult to, in turn , unwrap. Let's use an illustration where the plastic covering that you are trying to open up, such as a bag of potato chips, are excruciatingly hard to open. I don't seem to have the strength to pull them apart that I did. Next, my coordination is off. I will reach out, not looking, to put a cup of coffee on the table, something I have done thousands of times before and I'll let go of it and it's not on the table, it falls to the floor. I will pick up something and turn away with it and it slips out of my hand. These are the types of things that I am talking about when I say coordination, things I've been totally used to all of my life I can't do accurately any more.

My handwriting is very irregular simply because my writing hand, my left hand, doesn't work as well as it used to. I don't think that I could intelligibly write a full page on a yellow pad and have it be legible when I got through. And I'm sure losing 45 pounds in the last three years hasn't helped that energy base. I don't like the skinny frame that I am now.

The biggest thing, too, that is so important in this whole position of where you are in terms of aging is that feeling that you have a young mind with a lot of things that you want and need to do and you are imprisoned in an aged

body. It's awfully difficult to be able to handle that. The other prospect is that, do these get worse, steadily worse? How far?

The other thing, for example, another one, is short term memory loss. It's so frustrating, it gets you so angry at yourself that you just simply can't blame anyone else and what do you do? A name you know very, very well and you start to talk about it and you can't remember it. Suddenly it's not there in your memory. Everything else seems fine but you simply don't remember it. Why that particular name, or whatever, is the interesting question. Why that name? A good illustration, on my part, was that I talk about a prison in Kansas, a Federal prison. It's a very common name but right at this particular moment I can't remember it. And I have to think and think and think and as I start to think of something else, all of a sudden it comes back and the memory is of course of Leavenworth Prison in Kansas. And yet, five minutes from now I will try to remember it and I can't remember it. Why this? But the real question comes back again.

If this deterioration continues, in my own looking at it, eventually it's not worth this young mind to exist with this number of limitations. When do those limitations get to the point that it just isn't worth attempting to cope with them because the results are so little?

And then it comes to the other thing, a pattern of slowly but surely losing interest in the world around you and the way the world is acting and being.

It's very difficult to understand why you lose interest but it's not because you can't do it anymore, it just somehow feels like it's going in the wrong direction and you don't want to be in that wrong direction so you lose interest. I can give you many illustrations. For example, traveling to go somewhere. I look at the effort that it takes to go that somewhere, wherever that may be and I can't picture the results of going there being attractive enough to go through the efforts that it takes to get there. It's very simple. Let's say that you're going to Florida. My brother has invited me and my daughter has invited me, but I look and I say what would I do down there when I got there that would be attractive enough to go through the effort. And what's the effort? Booking the flight for starters. It means (1) assembling the clothes and stuff to go, arranging for someone to take care of the fur family and the house and the business (2) going to the airport and waiting around and struggling with the ritual of getting on an airplane and then having to change planes probably in Charlotte, North Carolina, and waiting another couple of hours until the one that goes to Tampa comes in. And what do you do during all that time, read? My problem is that I can't read very well.

Reading is hard for me with my eyes, so what do I do, just sit around and go to sleep? Sleeping on a bench or a chair in an airport is a very difficult thing to do. So I look at that and is that worth the effort to do and come back? And what do I do when I get there? Sure, it would be nice being with either my daughter or my brother and his wife, but I'm then restricted. I'm restricted because I can't take a nap when I want to take a nap. I can't eat when I want to eat. I can't simply stretch out and relax the way I may want to do, or what I may want to do may be contrary to those who are my hosts or hostess. So it's these kinds of things that I look at and I say is being there and the effort to get there, is that worth the perhaps some moments of pleasure. It just doesn't seem worth it. Not enough to make me really want to go through it.

And then let's take the associations with other people, so-called friends even here. Parts of it are nice, and parts of it are boring and parts of are very uncomfortable. The question is are the nice parts worth the effort of doing it? That's a very strange way of putting it, but that's what it comes down to. How does that work? I don't know. You can go and have dinner with somebody and the effort of getting there, you've got to go to dinner somewhere, you've got to eat somewhere, but then if you get into the other part of it, your conversation with that particular friend may be very limited and gets kind of stilted because you

can't tell it like it is. You cannot be truthful.

Here we go again. Is honesty the best policy? No one is truly honest. We like to think we are, but we're not because we don't want to make people feel bad because of something we don't particularly like or enjoy that they say or do. So these are the kinds of things that add up one after another.

So, how does the day begin? The day begins, my day, either with the pains of an ulcer stomach getting me up or simply wide awake and no point in staying in bed. And coming out and putting a swallow of Aloe Vera juice in my stomach to cool it down. And then, brewing some coffee and sitting down with a coffee and donut or perhaps a cinnamon bun, and finishing the bread stuff and then drinking coffee and having a smoke. And as I do this, I say what would I really like to do today? Not have to do, but like to do. And the problem becomes deeper and deeper because I find it so difficult to find something that I would really like to do, not have to do but like to do. I come up with nothing.

One of the challenges that I have put together is that I have some money in the bank, so you can't make it a question of whether I have some money to do something. I have, in a reasonable sort of way, I have enough money to apply to any particular thing I really want to do. And I simply can't find one thing that I really want to do.

How long does one go on suffering these various types

of pains and disability due to aging without something one really wants to do? So the question comes up, why am I hanging around? Why am I staying? Then the logical conclusion is that if it's not going to get any better, then systematically plan to set things up so that when you do leave, you leave in a way that you want it left. And that makes the problem even more difficult because I can't really conceive, in detail anyway or perhaps even generally, how I want things after I'm not here.

Basically I think I simply don't care. That's what it comes down to. I'm beginning more and more not to care about the world around me, whether now or in the future. And that's the big problem as far as I'm concerned. I can't find a huge motivating force. Maybe it's in me and I don't know it. But I can't find this heavy powerful thing that says "live and do". And a great part of that is the way the world is going. The irrationality is another way of putting it. I look real hard to find things that are happening in the world that I agree on, little simple things and big things.

Simple things; the way most cars look today. They all have a look that is very hard to differentiate one from another. It's very hard for me anyway to see which is a Ford and which is a Chevy or things like that. The big things; why in the world do we spend hundreds of millions of dollars in a place like Bosnia and elsewhere? If they want

to fight, let them fight themselves out. Why do we have to be so noble and so enthralled with the idea of human aid to these people? They got themselves in it. Somalia, the same way. All of this internal friction, why should we protect the Somalians? If they want to kill themselves, let them kill themselves. Why we attempt to protect them? Why should we worry about whether North Korea does or does not have nuclear capability? Do they threaten us? They haven't got missiles that can get all the way to the United States. And the thing goes on. Why do we care whether China has different rules of justice than ours? Attempting to deal with China, for example, and try to have their concept of human rights conform to ours. Is ours right or is theirs right? Who are we to be sure? So the problem is not simply local, it's worldwide.

By local I mean here in the United States. The very idea of the way the success of the United States is based, the economy or whatever you want to call it, is frightening and irrational.

Think of it. For example, the welfare of the nation and each individual purportedly depends on whether people buy things or not. Think of it. Think of it more. People, you depend on the guy down the road buying something. And if he doesn't buy something it's going to affect you. And there's something wrong with that. And talk about our whole run of crime and violence here in the United States. Crime

and violence. We defend it in our peculiar way because humans have rights. Humans don't have rights, or at least let's say that each human has the right to defend himself from the violence of others, one way or another. Whether it takes an AK47 or whatever.

And where does the change begin? How can it change? And it's not changing. Unless something radical comes along it's only going to get worse. And what possible radical thing could change that direction of all these drug induced homicides, so called. Where do we get all this, like racial dissatisfaction to the point of murder? How can that change? The point is we think "Oh that's wrong, that's bad" but how are you going to change it? How ARE you going to change it? The only way you could change would be to start all over again, and have a whole new race of humans who are educated in a different way and their animal instincts are brought under control very early.

There it goes again, you see? What would really interest me? I do like to accomplish things but there has to be a good reason for accomplishing things. Oh, a financial factor's nice but at this stage I don't want to make another million. I have no desire to sacrifice myself just to make another million.

And you talk about personal things. An interesting part of me; I get bored with all the ministrations of sexuality on television. It doesn't stimulate me, it seems

very ridiculous, and I have little or virtually none of the desires or sense of sexuality. There is no female that I know in my personal life that gives me the least inkling of a sexual response in me. Oh, there's a flicker now and then but it's only momentary and really has nothing to do with some woman I am talking to or meet or even think of. So that drive for sexual gratification is virtually wiped out in me. Maybe that's good, I don't know. But there it is.

And another simple animal thing. Food. Partially due to my stomach response, and so on, I don't have a desire for a particular food of any kind. I eat food, these days, only to fill a hole in my stomach so that my stomach won't ache as much as it has been or needs to do. And so I find that I can eat, at most, a handful of food and then I'm full. So I can't finish some of the lavish meals out at a restaurant and so I bring home in a box the rest of it to eat at home and then I forget about it. And pretty soon it's too old to eat. As I sit here and think and talk, I can't think of a single food that would be over there on the table that would lure me, or even the aroma of it that would make me stop and go over and get one. I may out of necessity to keep my stomach from feeling an ache but not because of that super delicious food. It doesn't mean that things don't taste good periodically but not enough to make me get up and go over just simply because of the taste of the food. It's a weird, weird situation to be in.

Oddly enough, there is a bright spot and that is my fur family here. Six cats and one dog. Sure, it's a task to feed them and go get the food to provide them with food but they are each an interesting personality. And it's quite apparent that each one does exhibit, call it love, call it attraction to me. And each one in a different sort of way. Their personalities are unique. They really are, I suppose, my family now that I am accustomed to and like. My fur family. And it just simply comes out to 6 cats and 1 dog. And the variance in them when I come in, they greet me each in a different way. For example, over in my cabin Tony will come in from outside through his cat door and he will come over and greet me before he goes and eats the food that I've laid out for him. And so it's not the food, he wants to come and see and be with me. And he will stay in the cabin as long as I'm there but I suspect without full knowledge, that he's out on the town out in the woods when I'm not there.

So it all comes down to one question. Why do I continue to live here in a physical body? I don't really know the answer. Is it the sum of the total, the sum of the cats and the sum of the productive work that I do get done? Or the friendship exhibited by some people and certainly not all. Are these sufficient enough to keep me here? The only answer that I can get at this point is that evidently if they do otherwise I certainly wouldn't bother to go through

what is happening to me.

And one other comment. I certainly don't look for fame, as it were, and even though it would seem that way, that's what I'm doing I certainly don't feel any desire to have more fame. I don't want necessarily to be well-known in the public eye. I'm partially known already, of course, but any more, no. If I could just delegate all that to somebody else that would be fine so I could go and be in a simple way without having to keep on this semi-public role of this Bob Monroe.

All of this would seem to indicate that I have a death wish and I've tried to explore that very carefully simply because of other factors that might indicate that death were very real. One is the fact that I cannot seem to stop smoking, even though I smoke the most lightweight cigarettes I can find. I've tried to analyze it very carefully why I cannot stop and smoking is a companion more than anything else. I don't inhale, except in the mouth of course. But I don't take deep breaths and pull the smoke all the way down into my lungs. Still, it seems out of control in that I can't say "that's enough-stop". Now whether it's nicotine addiction or whatever, my best psychological friends have said to get some of the other things settled before you go through the trauma of stopping smoking under these conditions.

But the death wish signs are there and yet I cannot

find an upfront drive in this particular case. It would seem more to the point that I am attempting to stay physically alive. Else, why would I go through the conventional route of trying to cure my ulcer stomach condition? And on top of that, go to the alternate route which is unconventional medication which has all sorts of names.

Evidentially, to the contrary, I seem to have some hidden life wish, physical life wish, that I'm attempting to exercise in spite of all the things that I have become acutely aware of. Another interesting factor is that I now seem to have only rarely any non-physical activity. And such takes forms that I have never experienced before. Perhaps some people would call them nightmares. But I don't because there is no fear involved in it.

It's a strange thing how whatever I am, what I have been, or what I will be are a very strange mix at this point. My non-physical contacts and friends and experience have virtually evaporated. Perhaps only the future will release the answer to these but it seems from my own point of view and it is surprising to me, that I can't find truly a strong death wish. And yet, my rational logical part of me seems to say that if this keeps on getting this way, why bother to stay around? And there is a good point in that.

Then there's my experience with conventional and alternate medicine. Doctors prescribe pills for me such as

antibiotics and I react to them as if I had taken poison.
The same with homeopathic remedies.

Finally, the most recent experience. I got out of bed at four in the morning to go to the bathroom in a pitch black bedroom to empty my bladder, something I had done hundreds of times in the past. I fell over a suitcase and savagely landed on my left shoulder and forehead. Two days later, I went to the hospital for an X ray, and there was a hairline fracture in my humerus. It took two, three weeks in a sling and much painful exercise to get the arm and hand serviceable, and I still write poorly. I still get headaches.

Was this a signal, a hard-nosed message? In the past, I had been "protected" from injuries in such falls. But I did learn how fragile and helpless I now am. It brought out the real lack of help I now have, help I had before.

What comes next??? And how do I plan for it??? At least I have more than my former family in several close friends who will try to understand and assist me in this new learn-by-experience.